



Khyen Chyen

Kashmir Observer Food & Beverages Supplement



Fried Chicken
IN SRINAGAR

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FOOD MATTERS

Travelling For Food

Majority of People Select Travel Destinations for Food

Khyen Chyen Desk

The love that we all share is our love for food. While each of us may have our own unique reasons to travel, it turns out that 67 per cent of people in India pick a place for the local food choices it has, as per survey conducted by Booking.com, a leading travel site.

As per a research released under the name 'Taste of Travel', about 49 per cent of Indian travellers are planning to take a dedicated food tourism trip in 2018. The findings aren't surprising given that good food during travel is always something that doubles the joy of travel. With Indian cities like Kolkata, New Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai and Jaipur leading as top food destinations in India, India seems to be attracting more and more food lovers given its huge diversity in food and the amazing street food culture.

Although Kashmir has been a favourite among travellers for its picturesque valleys, lush green meadows and refreshing climate, the food of the place has largely remained unexplored except the Wazwan, a feast served in Kashmir weddings. This is probably due to the lack of knowledge about the traditional local cuisine as well as the non-availability of information about which food places one needs to check out while in Kashmir. Kolkata has its rasgullas, and the mishti dahi is high on popularity for its delicious flavour.

People travel to Kolkata for its Victori-



an gothic architecture, or even to witness the durga puja, but every traveller knows about Bengali cuisine. Which is why businesses in the city operate at the level of fulfilling every traveller's culinary desires. Lucknow is known for its Awadhi history, but who doesn't look forward to

heading there for the kebabs and biryani? Amritsar is as picturesque a city as they come, but even before you enter the city, all highways are laced with dhabas that serve massively large parathas and lassis. No matter where one travels, it has become definitive that a city showcases its culinary culture with all its might, because the next generation of travellers is bold, opinionated and hungry!



IT'S CRUCIAL TO MOST travellers these days, that their next tourist destination caters to their taste buds"

Travel and food are a concept that are becoming dependent on each other. It's crucial to most travellers these days, that their next tourist destination caters to their taste buds. This isn't just about vegetarians getting non meat based food anymore, it has moved to an experience, defined by what a person desires to indulge in outside their comfort zone, and unknown to their palate. Local businesses thrive, and tourists create food memories, when they feast on what the local gastronomy has to offer.

It's time people in travel trade and food business here take note and provide quality Khyen Chyen to visitors and locals wishing to eat out.

67% **OF PEOPLE IN INDIA** pick a place for the local food choices it has, as per survey conducted by Booking.com, a leading travel site.

Kashmir: A Prime Tourist Destination Sans Quality Food Joints

Noorain Ansari

The valley of Kashmir which is known all over the world for its mesmerising beauty and rich cultural heritage has virtually no place for the incoming tourists to savour its traditional cuisine.

Only a handful of tourists visiting Kashmir are lucky enough to be invited to a wedding and enjoy the entire course of authentic Wazwan. Sadly, none have the luck to savour real Kashmiri food, that is enjoyed by the locals daily take in their homes.

Boulevard, the tourist hub of the state has some of the fine hotels but not a single good restaurant serving traditional Kashmiri food or any international cuisines. On the contrary, the famous boulevard road of Kashmir is now crowded with Dhabas like Dilli Di Rasoi, Punjabi Dhaba etc

There is no dedicated Chinese, Arabian or Mughlai restaurant in our entire Kashmir Valley. All major international brands like McDonalds, KFC, Subway or Pizza Hut are absent from Kashmir.

"You will get all types of Punjabi, Gujarati and Jain foods but no authentic Kashmiri or global flavours are available in our restaurants", rues Hakem Saamir Ali, CEO of Hornet Hospex, a leading travel service.

Some restaurants do serve an odd Wazwan dish but that cannot represent the rich feast of wazwan for which presentation is more important than the taste, he said.

All destination cities in India as well as the world have developed street food culture that attracts tourists in huge numbers but alas Kashmir has none.

Except dingy shops selling mutton barbecue at Khayyam or rediwallas selling kebabs and tikka at Makai Point, there is no place to taste Kashmir's street food.

Even at Makai Point, Lakes and Waterways Development Authority prohibits foodies from entering its park with barbecue bought from adjacent food joints.

Moreover whatever little street food is available it is sold without any checks by the Municipal authorities, as SMC has no mechanism to test the samples, whenever lifted, for quality.

Julia Fernandez who arrived in Kashmir from Moscow has a bitter experience to share. "Such a beautiful place has been messed up. There are lot of things which cause inconvenience to the tourists.

"There is no information brochures, travel guides or maps available here. A person is completely lost and often ends up at the wrong place. I wasn't able to



find any food of my liking here. I am not used to taking spicy food or rice but since nothing else is available here, I was forced to eat whatever the dhabas serve here. There is also a huge variation in rates. One person offers a shikara ride at a very less price while as another person charges an outrageously huge amount for the same ride. Similar is the case with the food being sold."

Shilpa Gupta, a tourist from West Bengal is happy that she got to taste some amazing dishes from all across North India despite them being served in "not so hygienic manner".

"Most of these Dhabas here serve food in the open due to which the dust and exhaust fumes from diesel driven vehicles settles on it, says Shilpa, adding that the Boulevard should be a motor free zone".

"There is no information available about any food joints and cafes neither can one find anyone to recommend places for good food, says Nazanine Dehqan, an Iranian tourist, visiting Kashmir for the first time. "I can't even find out if there is a place outside my hotel to have fresh food", she said.

Commissioner Secretary Tourism has a different take. "We can not force restaurant owners to serve this or that. Tourists usually explore the city and they themselves find out places which serve good food."

When asked, while doing road shows the world over to lure high end tourists, isn't it incumbent upon his department to first build infrastructure, he gave no satisfactory answer.

"One of the reasons why dhabas are such a hit in Kashmir is because our valley gets very few foreigners," says Sohail Iqbal, a businessman.

"Most of the tourists visiting Kashmir are from India. Thus to maximise their profits, dhabas and restaurants are ignoring the small percentage of foreigners, a decision which is detrimental for our future trade. Also Punjab Di Rasoi, Delhi Di Rasoi, Prince Dhaba, Lhasa Dhaba etc are all operated by non-locals leased out to them by local hoteliers."

Quite a few non veg varieties are served here. Even for carnivore residents of Srinagar whenever they venture out with their families, they have to be content with Dhaal Roti.

Is Our Street Food Safe For Consumption?

Syed Mohammad Burhan

Never lacking for patrons, and consumed with relish, traditional Kashmiri snacks may not be a substitute for a proper meal, but are an inseparable part of Kashmiri life, and a readily available means of sustenance for people on the move – which explains why stalls

selling the highly spiced fare sprout around key bus stands, busy transport terminals, commercial areas and shrines. Brisk sales attest to a huge and enthusiastic clientele for a menu served literally off the frying pan, and at mouthwatering rates. The crowds around makeshift stands and handcarts which dispense munje gaad, nadir munje, paratha, makai watchi, and achar, and the rows of automobiles stopping by street-side shops for sizzling

roasts known as seekh tujj, however, do not mitigate concerns about hygienic and other safety standards like purity of ingredients. But even as they hold their own against competition from cafes and fast-food parlours, street food vendors swear by the quality of their product while standards watchdogs admit logistical issues in ensuring food safety norms, as the Kashmir Observer found out during an outing in the streets.



I eat street food because it represents the local industry. I prefer street food over fast food as it gives a fillip to our local entrepreneurship. It is hygienic and it can even improve one's immunity. So many people survive on street food. Had it not been hygienic, street food could have turned into a cause of a serious health crisis.

Mohammad Salim
Political Science Student

Whenever I eat street food, I become worried about my health. The government should ensure that food sold by street vendors conforms to safety standards. Authorities should



stop harassing street food vendors, and take quality control measures instead, like regular checking and inspections. This will benefit both vendors as well as their customers.

Abrar Hussain Shah
Law Student, Kashmir University



I have never received any complaints about anyone having fallen sick after taking tea at my stall. Tourists form a big chunk of my customers. Even Rahul Gandhi had tea at my stall during his last visit to Kashmir. We

buy bread from the local bakers, and the milk we use comes in sealed packs. We ensure that cleanliness is maintained.

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Farooq Ahmed
Tea Stall Owner



So far as the microbiological perspective is concerned, foods which are served hot are safe for consumption. Artificial dyes have not been found safe. If the same oil is used for many days, then fried stuff is not suitable for eating.

Dr Idrees Ahmed
Senior Assistant Professor, Food Science and Technology, KU

At present, it is difficult to ensure that street food vendors follow food safety measures as they are not concentrated at one place.

Our commissioner had a hearing in the court recently where he stated that vending zones on the pattern of Jammu would be created in Srinagar as well. Once the registration of street food vendors is completed, it will be possible for us to ensure that food safety measures are taken by street food vendors.

Assistant Commissioner
Food Safety and Standards Department

Fried Chicken in Srinagar



Khyen Chyen Team

Fried chicken is described as the quintessential fast food item, that is synonymous with being cheap, quick and delicious meal. There are numerous fast food chains recognised for their fried chicken recipes, with KFC leading the way.

Though the multinational outlet is reluctant to come to Kashmir because of political uncertainty we have inherited, Srinagar has created its own variety which will give the world's foremost fried chicken brand run for its money.

Two such places in the city are "Mummy Please Express" on the Residency Road and "Modern Sweets" at Headwon, opposite State Hospital. Both eateries are known for their fried chicken, and can quell anyone's desire for wholesome, battered, chick-en goodness.

Mummy Please Express

'Mummy Please Express' sits on the third floor. Down below in a quick getaway eatery of the same brand, sort of reminiscent of an American fast food joint. But the

main restaurant is well laid out, with glass tables and cushioned chairs, making for an extremely traditional Asian ambiance. The menu is probably one of the most diverse one's I've seen in any Srinagar restaurant. From the typical 'Tuj', to the modern day meat pizzas or spaghetti arabiata, they have it all. But I was here for the KFC competitor. I asked straight, for a fried chicken meal, which comes with two mammoth pieces of chicken dipped in batter and fried, a portion of crisp French fries and a medium sized beverage. The chicken arrived looking perfectly cooked, and to the touch it felt as sinfully deep fried as what you'd expect in an international food chain. You can hear the crunch and snap, just as you bite into them, and from the inside, the meat was tender and succulent.

The French fries were a brilliant golden brown colour, and I indulged in them with packet tomato ketchup, because you can't have them any other way? No oil drips or overbearing smells from when they were cooked. Just delicious fries. And nothing more

needs to be said about the perfect glass of cola to wash down your meal with. Yes, the meal is excessive. Yes, it represents human opulence at its finest. And yes, the calories are way beyond the average person requires in one meal. But do I really care? Probably not. This meal is as good as a KFC 5\$ box, if not better.

MODERN SWEETS

On the other hand, 'Modern Sweets', has a fast food sort of vibe to their ambience, and their food. As you enter you're surrounded by an assortment of sweets and confectionary, because as their title suggests, they are a sweet shop first. Once you make your way through the 'ladus' and 'barfis', you will see a counter arranged in the same way as international fast food chains. There's pizzas, wings, boneless strips, shakes and of course, fried chicken. We ordered the boneless fried chicken strips with ketchup, and the chicken cheese burger. Though this place





“**SRINAGAR DOES LACK THE AMERICAN FAST FOOD FRANCHISES**, but with restaurants such as “Mummy Please Express” and “Modern Sweets”, Kashmiris no longer need to long for a quick, cheap and delicious meal. Locals have learned to live without quality foreign chains, and devised their own, more than stellar solutions. Eating fried chicken in Srinagar represents more than just a quick meal. It shows that though there may be a disconnect with the outside world, we won’t let phenomena like trade and conflict deter us from globalisation, and in this form, a meal synonymous all over the world. Fried chicken in Srinagar is delicious, global and damn rightly deserving for Kashmiris.”

has a fast food aura, the time the burger took to arrive was anything but quick. As someone who has frequented fast food joints in other parts of the world, as soon as I was asked to “take a seat” after ordering, I knew something was amiss. The burger took 15 minutes to arrive, and in fast food restaurant terms, that is an eternity. Though my patience was well rewarded, as the burger was lined with the restaurants own mayonnaise, and the chicken patty was perfectly cooked. The boneless chicken strips however, were far from perfect. The batter was overbearing with the scent of oil, and once you bit in to the strip, the batter case would come apart from the chicken, sometimes leaving a long strand of chicken in your mouth. This was perhaps the low point of our fried chicken finding escapades, but the burgers, chicken bucket and the mutton/fish

items at Modern Sweets, are compelling reasons why I’d want to come here again. What also doesn’t hurt to know, is that Modern Sweets will end up being a lot lighter on your wallets as compared to Mummy Please Express.

Srinagar does lack the American fast food franchises, but with restaurants such as “Mummy Please Express” and “Modern Sweets”, Kashmiris no longer need to long for a quick, cheap and delicious meal. Locals have learned to live without quality foreign chains, and devised their own, more than stellar solutions. Eating fried chicken in Srinagar represents more than just a quick meal. It shows that though there may be a disconnect with the outside world, we won’t let phenomena like trade and conflict deter us from globalisation, and in this form, a meal synonymous all over the world. Fried chicken in Srinagar

KHYEN CHYEN RECIPE



FRIED DRUMSTICKS

Now that we have got you all drooling about fried chicken, let us come to your rescue with a crunchy and easy fried chicken recipe that will allow you a taste of authentic fried chicken without needing you to step out from the comfort of your home. This easy peesy recipe takes minimum effort but the flavour sure packs a punch.

You will need:

1 kg chicken legs
Half a cup of curd
2 tsp chicken seasoning or garam masala
½ tsp black pepper powder
Salt as per taste
1 tsp dried herbs
1 tsp red chili powder
1 cup oats
1 cup flour
1 egg beaten nicely
And of course oil to fry

How to make the magic happen:

Make bone deep cuts on the drumsticks and boil them in water along with the black pepper powder. Take the boiled drumsticks, and marinate them in curd along with the chicken seasoning, dried herbs, salt, and chilli powder for a minimum of 4 hours. You can even marinate it overnight if you really want the spices to shine through. After marination, coat the drumsticks in flour and fry on high heat till slightly brown. Take the fried drumsticks, dip in egg wash and roll in oats before frying again on medium heat till golden and crispy. Serving Suggestion: Mix a little mayo with mustard or chilli sauce and your perfect dip to go with the chicken is ready

Email us your comments about the recipe on our email address. You can even email us a photograph of the prepared recipe for it to be featured in our next issue. Till then stay happy but never hungry.

KHYEN CHYEN RATINGS

- **MUMMY PLEASE EXPRESS**
3.5 ★★★★★
- **MODERN SWEETS**
2.5 ★★★★★

“**THE SUBTLE SAFFRON FLAVOUR COMBINES WELL** with the delicate flavours of the dry fruits and as you keep on enjoying the kulfi, you begin to get a hint of cardamom flavour too.”



Malaie Wali Kulfi

Shah Matka Kulfi Seller, Saryabal

Najwa Shabir

In the heart of the bustling Saryabal market, tucked cosily among a long row of shops that sell a variety of merchandise ranging from garments to kitchen ware, lies a small shop which would usually go unnoticed if it wasn't for its signature red cloth wrapped matka on the shop front.

The cold earthen matka full of fresh Kulfi immediately brings a smile on the faces of the thirsty shoppers and the smile only gets bigger as one begins to notice the proper and well-kept sitting space complete with a jug of water, something that stands quite in contrast with the rest of the eateries found in the market. The bar counter style of seating not only allows one to enjoy a refreshing bowl of fresh kulfi without worrying about it dripping all over you or the pushing and the shoving that again is a norm in the area but also leaves enough room for your numerous shopping bags.

Although not massively sized, the ice-cream shop, which goes by the name SHAH (Hot & Cold) still offers enough room for about 10 people at a time. The owner, Shabir Ahmad, who hails from downtown Srinagar, the land of some legendary matka kulfi makers, like Amma Buda, whose kulfi is remembered even today, greets you with a big smile on his face and happily allows you to inspect the matka to ensure everything is safe and clean even in the darkest crevices of the kulfi and ice filled pot. Once you are done placing your order, he expertly takes out a kulfi from the mould and carefully slits in two before placing it in a bowl and topping with cold noodles.

Sold for rupees 50 per bowl, the kulfi which is prepared by the owner at home, isn't only refreshing on these hot summer days but nutritious too as it's full of almonds, cashews and pistachios instead of the mere traces that we have grown accustomed to.

The subtle saffron flavour combines well with the delicate flavours of the dry fruits and as you keep on enjoying the kulfi, you begin to get a hint of cardamom flavour too. The sweetness of the kulfi is well comple-

mented by the cold noodles. The balance of flavours is so well rounded that even as one is enjoying spoonfuls of the kulfi, one can't help but feel sad about finishing it.

Immediately after finishing your bowl of kulfi, you want to have one more and then another because the perfect taste of the kulfi keeps lingering on your tongue, making you keep wanting more and more.

Even though the owner also sells biryani and chicken fry, the Matka kulfi is what attracts the maximum customers and what you need to be trying. Plus it is very rare to find a matka kulfi seller who will agree to do big orders of kulfi for your wedding or any other parties you have coming up in these hot summer months when nothing refreshes like an earthy expertly made matka kulfi.

“**KULFI LIKELY ORIGINATED IN THE MUGHAL EMPIRE**, which dominated India in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. This was prepared in noble kitchens using ice brought in from the Himalayas. The word is spelled as 'qulfi' in Persian, meaning 'covered cup'.”



CHAI

WITH A PRICE



carrot cake.

The fragrance of the tea, as their name suggests, was indeed special. Served in a transparent glass tea pot, there was a dark red glisten to the tea, and on the side a cup of milk, leading the tea drinker to decide just how he or she liked their cup. I poured myself half a cup, two drops of milk and a pack of brown sugar. The tea was literally uplifting, and after a cup or two, I genuinely felt happier. The carrot cake has soft, delicious and shone under the lights of the establishment. Though the cake was a bit on the drier side, it didn't take away from the fact that it was extremely comforting and left a warm, fuzzy feeling inside me.

Ahdoos is a place that can only be described as special, and a rarity in Kashmir. But a cup of tea and a piece of cake, are so synonymous in the daily existence of a Kashmiri, that I wonder just how many people will be willing to cough up close 200 rupees for one visit. The quality of the products served here is excellent, but I don't see the place being regularly frequented by the chai connoisseurs. And if the main targets are tourists and outsiders, perhaps they could be located on Boulevard or closer to Dal Lake? Maybe this is just my cynicism as a reviewer, but I implore you to not let this take away from the fact that Ahdoos is spell bindingly good, and definitely worth a visit.

Creme Bakery Cafe
Residency Road Srinagar

Jughal Bhide

In Srinagar, Chai isn't a just a beverage. It is synonymous with being a concept, or an elixir of endless work if you will. As an outsider, I've come to notice whenever I am offered a cup, I get asked whether I'd like 'nun chai', or the usual 'Lipton'. I have had my experiences with 'nun chai', and I'd describe them as challenging. But there is a sense of comfort in every sip of what the Kashmiri's describe as 'Lipton' chai, or what I've grown up calling, Masala tea. Finding really good tasting tea is a little bit of a challenge in Srinagar, because people are so used to the concept that we've accepted mediocrity. Which is why in the pursuit of finding something outside the ordinary, I traveled to Ahdoos, a place fabled for its restaurant. The bakery at Ahdoos is known around the city for its pastries and confectionery items, but what many people perhaps don't know is that they can enjoy a cup of chai here as well, along with their favorite cakes and cookies.

Walking in to the place, I was greeted with the sweet fragrance you'd associate with a bakery. But not just any bakery, a high end establishment showcasing imported chocolates and novelty items, one immediately gets teleported to a metropolitan city café, the likes of

which hardly exist in Srinagar. There's Western music playing in the bakery, and the assortment of pastries makes one feel as though the café belongs in Mumbai or New York City. But alas, we are in Srinagar. The city deserves a bakery of international standards and quality. I have a look at their chalked out menu, and instantly chose Ahdoos Special Tea, and a piece of glistening



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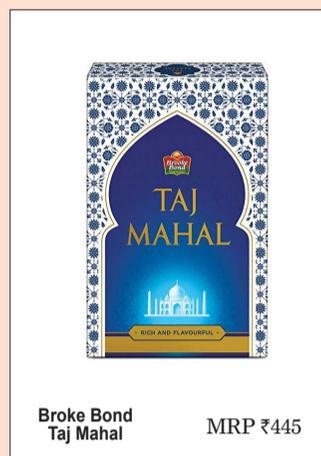
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